

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Louisiana
COUNTY:	Natchitoches
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME

COMMON:

Melrose Plantation

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Yucca Plantation

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

La. Route 119

CITY OR TOWN:

Melrose

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE

Louisiana

CODE

COUNTY:

Natchitoches

CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Tourist Attraction</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches

STREET AND NUMBER:

Box 2654

CITY OR TOWN:

Natchitoches

STATE:

Louisiana

CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Natchitoches Parish Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Natchitoches

STATE

Louisiana

CODE

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Buildings Survey LA-69

DATE OF SURVEY: 1937

☒ Federal☐ State☐ County☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington, D. C.

STATE:

CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE

COUNTY

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DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION	
CONDITION	(Check One) <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	
<p>The grounds of Yucca Plantation, now known as Melrose Plantation, contain what may well be the oldest buildings of African design built by blacks, for the use of blacks, in the United States. Although there are eight buildings on the property, only the Yucca House, the African House, the Ghana House, the Big House, and the Barn are of interest to the Afro-American history of the site.</p> <p>The following descriptions are taken from the Form IO-300 completed by Samuel Wilson, Jr., Architect, for the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches on 13 April 1972.</p> <p>1. <u>The Yucca House</u>, said to be the original plantation house or former slave hospital is a long, rectangular structure with galleries front and rear, the floor level being only a foot or so above the ground. The walls are of colombage construction, a heavy frame of squared timbers, morticed and tennoned and pegged to sills and plates, the spaces between the timbers filled with mud and moss or animal hair. The galleries may have originally extended also across the ends of the house, but have long been enclosed so that the floor plan now consists of two large rooms each with its separate fireplace and brick chimney, and the end or gallery rooms. The ceilings all have exposed wood beams. Doors and windows had batten shutters, with interesting wood barred grilles at the windows. The present gallery columns are peeled cypress logs and are probably not original.</p> <p>2. <u>The African House</u> is a unique, nearly square structure, directly in the rear of the Big House and may have been intended as a stable on the ground floor and quarters or storage above. The ground floor walls are of heavy horizontal, square timbers dovetailed at the corners, the <u>piece sur piece</u> type of construction used by the earliest French settlers in Louisiana. The great hipped, shingled roof almost conceals the upper story and extends some ten feet beyond the exterior walls on all four sides, supported by round long struts extending out from above the brick wall to the plate that supports the rafters. The absence of supporting columns gives the building a curious umbrella-like appearance that is believed to be of African derivation.</p> <p>3. <u>The Big House</u> is a raised basement type plantation in the Louisiana French Colonial style with early Greek Revival details. The walls of the basement story are of brick masonry, painted. The exterior walls of the upper story are covered with weatherboards, and are probably of colombage construction with either bricks of mud and moss (bousillage) between the posts. A gallery extends across the entire front and rear of the house with square brick peers on the lower story and chamfered wood columns on the upper. The hipped roof, covered with wood shingles, extends over the galleries. Stairways on the galleries provide access to the upper floor. The attic is lighted by well proportioned dormer windows and is unfinished but accessible by a small rear ladder-like stair. The rooms on the upper story are plastered with wood ceilings. The mantels on both stories are of wood with rather unusual paneled over-mantels. There is a single chimney. The house is only one room in depth with two large rooms on each floor and a small room or</p>	

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☒ 18th Century | ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Afro-American History</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Yucca Plantation, known after 1875 as Melrose Plantation, is uniquely illustrative of several important facets of Afro-American history. Marie Therese Coin-Coin, a black woman who had been a slave to a Frenchman in Natchitoches and who was freed in the last twenty-five years of the eighteenth century, established Yucca Plantation near the French and Spanish Catholic settlement of northwestern Louisiana. As the mistress of Yucca Plantation, she was a property owner and a wealthy businesswoman at a time when most black women were slaves and most white women had no identity apart from their husbands. The African design of the earliest buildings on the plantation reflect Marie Therese's independence in refusing to adopt the European models of architecture around her and her pride in her African background. The mulatto community which grew outside Natchitoches was a little world unto itself for many years before the Civil War, and the lives of its inhabitants contradict many of the generalizations regarding the colonial and ante bellum South. One rather striking example of this is the fact that Marie Therese and her mulatto children owned slaves. An important chapter might be added to American art history if the many surviving paintings of members of the Metoyer family, which may be the earliest and finest collection of portraits of Afro-American subjects in the same family, could be collected, copied, and studied.

Marie Therese was the slave of an official at the French fort established in Natchitoches. Her date of birth is not known. Parish records show the baptism of a Marie Therese in 1742 but whether or not this is the same Marie Therese cannot as yet be determined. "Marie Therese" was by no means an unusual name and there are several indications that the Marie Therese of Yucca Plantation was born in Africa. In 1767 she was "loaned" to a French soldier at the fort who paid her "owner" for her services. Marie Therese became Pierre Thomas Metoyer's common-law wife and between 1768 and 1787 they had nine children. These children were considered slaves and the "property" of their mother's "owner." Pierre purchased the first four of his children in 1776, the year of the American Revolution. In 1778 he purchased a fifth child and his common-law wife. In 1780, two more children were purchased. The remaining children were born after their mother's purchase and were considered free.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American State Papers. Public Land Series. Vol. II.

Dover, Cedric. American Negro Art. New York: New York Graphic Society, 1960.

Internal Revenue Assessment Lists for Louisiana, 1863-1866.

Kane, Harnett T. Plantation Parade. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1945.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES			
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	35° 35' 58" 92° 57' 57"	
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"		
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"		
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **5.77 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Marcia M. Greenlee, Historical Projects Director	
ORGANIZATION The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation	DATE
STREET AND NUMBER: 1420 N Street, N. W., Suite 101	
CITY OR TOWN: Washington, D. C. 20005	STATE CODE

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION (cont'd.) - 2

cabinet at each end of the rear gallery. French doors open from each room to the front and rear galleries. At either end of the front gallery a two story pyramidal roofed, hexagonal pavillion was added during the Henry ownership period. (1875-1970) A two story rear kitchen wing was also added during this period and spoils the effect of the rear facade.

4. The Ghana House is a one story, one room structure of heavy squared logs laid horizontally and dove-tailed at the corners like the upper story of the African House. The double pitched, hipped roof with wide overhanging foundation consists only of four stones supporting the sills, one at each corner of the building. This small building is of interest because of its wall construction.

5. The Barn is a rectangular frame structure with a hipped roof which extends over the front and rear where it is supported on peeled log columns. The roof is now covered with corrugated sheet iron but was probably originally wood shingles. A small storage building of somewhat similar frame construction completes the complex of Melrose buildings.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd.) - 2

Although the Metoyer's domestic arrangement was not unusual for the time or place, a priest new to the area was outraged to find the couple "living in sin" and was instrumental in breaking the alliance up. Pierre then married a white widow and had three children by her. He continued, however, to assist Marie Therese and his children by her. He helped her with her first application for a land grant from the French government by which she obtained 800 arpents (677 acres). In 1794 Marie Therese claimed two more tracts, one having 800 arpents and the other somewhat smaller in size. Her property holdings and those of her children continued to grow until almost the entire region seventeen miles south of Natchitoches was Metoyer owned.

A thorough study of Marie Therese's business affairs is still to be made. However it appears that she engaged first in the lumber trade and then in the planting and sale of indigo. Her eldest son, Nicholas Augustin, upon his maturity, assumed the role of family head. In 1840, his property was assessed at a total value of \$100,360. At that time he held 2,500 arpents of land (an arpent is just a little smaller than an acre), forty-five slaves, a home, two cotton mills, farm animals, and undoubtedly cash assests. Nicholas' brother, Louis, left an estate valued at nearly \$113,000. Other brothers and his sister Suzanne also left sizable estates at their deaths, despite financial depression and the decline in the value of the dollar. Dominique's estate was approximately \$43,000, Joseph's was worth \$31,000, and Suzanne's was valued at \$62,000.

A free mulatto family of the Metoyer's wealth is in itself historically significant but the added feature of their slave holding makes them even more significant. Exactly how many slaves the Metoyers owned and how they were treated is still to be learned. Technically, of course, all of Pierre and Marie Therese's children, and Marie Therese herself, were slaves, since Pierre purchased them as such and to present knowledge there is no indication of their formal manumission.

The original plantation buildings which still stand today, Yucca House and African House, if not actually built by Marie Therese, certainly must have been built under her direction. Their design is clearly evocative of Africa. Marie Therese's grandson, Louis, built the large plantation house, now called Melrose, about 1833. He and his family lived there until the property was lost through poor management in 1847. After 1847 Yucca ceased to be a mulatto house and from that date to the present, whites have owned the property.

In 1970 Melrose Plantation was sold to the Southdown Land Company. The furnishings, including Metoyer portraits, were auctioned off to the public and many are now in the possession of private collectors. In restoring this property, efforts should be made to

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd.) - 3

purchase or borrow these portraits so that they can be copied and properly studied. They provide an essential aspect of Metoyer history in that they show the people who made the history.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (cont'd.)

Mignon, Francois. "The Story of Melrose." Natchitoches: Oldest Settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. The Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches. Natchitoches, La.: Printed by the Natchitoches Times, 1958.

Papers of the Cloutier Family, 1725-1941. Held in Northwestern State College of Louisiana Russell Library, Natchitoches, La.

Saxon, Lyle. Old Louisiana. New Orleans: Robert L. Crager and Co., 1929.

Seebold, Herman de Bachelie. Old Louisiana Plantation Homes and Family Trees. Published privately, 1941.

U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules for Louisiana, 1820-1860.

The Above is Only a Partial Listing